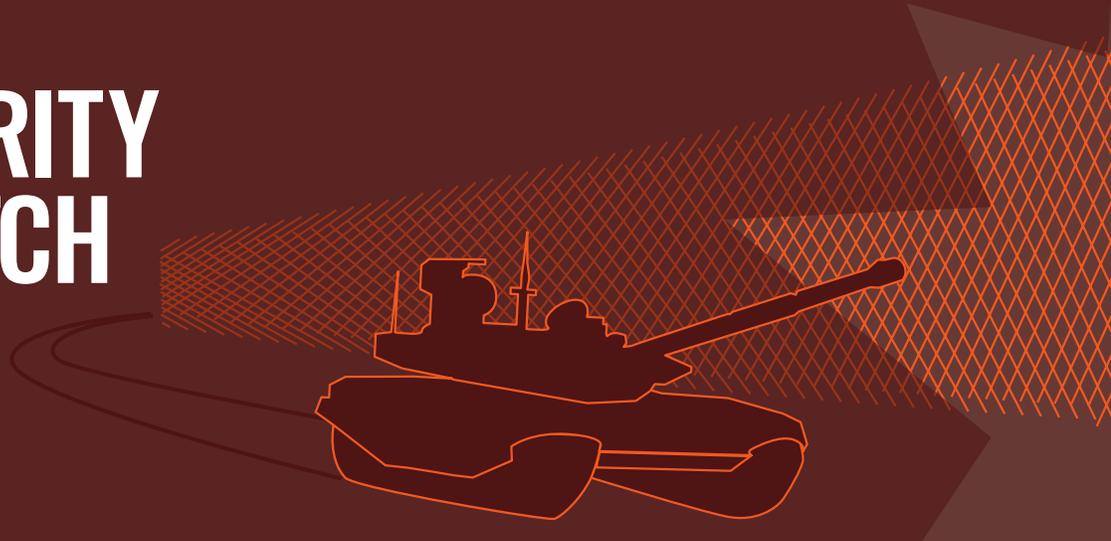




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF JUNE 8–14, 2019

Summary

- Militants reportedly kidnapped at least 11 civilians in two incidents near Arish.
- Wilayat Sinai claimed three improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in North Sinai this week.
- An unclaimed attack near Arish wounded six policemen.
- On June 8, the Egyptian interior ministry said that they had killed four individuals. The ministry claimed the deceased were connected to last week's Batal-14 checkpoint raid in Arish.
- An Egyptian military court reached a verdict at the trial of 296 defendants convicted of terrorism and assassination charges.
- American officials including Special Representative Ambassador James Jeffrey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joel Rayburn, and CENTCOM Commander General Kenneth McKenzie met with senior Egyptian officials and Arab League leaders.
- The Sinai Tribes Union published statistics on civilian and military casualties sustained in counter-terror operations in North Sinai.

Militants Reportedly Kidnap At Least 11 Civilians in Two Incidents Near Arish

On June 13, Mada Masr, citing eyewitnesses and local sources, reported that militants kidnapped at least 11 civilians in two separate incidents. The outlet reported that four Sawarka tribespeople were first kidnapped when gunmen set up a checkpoint near Bir al-Abd. Later that evening, militants kidnapped at least seven people, including two prominent lawyers, between Midan and Rawda. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the kidnappings, and it remains unclear whether the militants coordinated the kidnappings with one another.

On April 20, militants kidnapped five people near the location of the June 13 evening kidnappings. The militants released their captives shortly after interrogating them about collaborating with security forces. No group has since claimed responsibility for that incident. Wilayat Sinai has previously claimed responsibility for numerous kidnappings, including that of a Coptic police forensics expert on January 20. Police were unsuccessful in recovering the expert, Adib Nakhla; two conscripts were injured in the rescue attempt.

Wilayat Sinai Claims Three IED Attacks; Unclaimed IED Wounds Six Police

On June 11, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for wounding an unspecified number of Egyptian soldiers with an improvised explosive device (IED) east of Sheikh Zuweid. The same day, Wilayat Sinai also claimed responsibility for damaging an Egyptian armored personnel carrier with an IED, south of the Arish airport. On June 12, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for an IED attack on an Egyptian army military vehicle in west Arish.

On June 13, the Associated Press cited Egyptian security officials in reporting that a roadside bomb wounded six police officers near Arish. On January 14, the Associated Press reported that a similar unclaimed attack killed a Central Security Force conscript and wounded four others in Rafah.

Interior Ministry Kills Four Suspected Militants in Arish Counter-Terrorism Raid

On June 8, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior announced that it had killed four suspected militants in Arish's Abu Eita neighborhood. The ministry said the militants were connected with the raid on the Batal-14 checkpoint near Arish. Including the June 8 counter-terrorism operation, the interior ministry has killed 26 individuals the ministry suspected of involvement in response to the June 5 Wilayat Sinai attack. One interior ministry raid, reported on June 5, killed 14, and another, reported on June 7, killed eight.

Retaliatory operations have increased the interior ministry's reported presence in North Sinai. In each of the last three months, the ministry announced at least one counter-terror operation in North Sinai. Prior to that, however, the interior ministry had last announced a counter-terrorism operation in North Sinai in October 2017.

Military Court Sentences 296 to Prison For 2014 Sisi Assassination Plot

On June 12, an Egyptian military court issued sentences for individuals accused of involvement in a 2014 plot to assassinate President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi in Mecca. Thirty-two people were sentenced to life in prison, 264 were sentenced to between three and fifteen years in prison, two were acquitted, one was transferred to another court, and another defendant died awaiting trial. In February a military court sentenced eight people to death for their involvement in the plot. Nearly half of the defendants were reportedly tried in absentia.

Senior Egyptian Officials Receive U.S. Delegation in Cairo

On June 10 and 11, American officials including Special Representative Ambassador James Jeffrey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joel Rayburn, and CENTCOM Commander General Kenneth McKenzie met with senior Egyptian officials including Sisi, Defense Minister General Mohammed Zaki, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Lieutenant General Mohammed Farid Hegazy, and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. Over several meetings, the parties discussed efforts to stabilize Syria, regional security issues, and avenues for future cooperation between the United States and Egypt.

Sinai Tribes Union Releases Internal Sinai Conflict Totals

A Sinai Tribes Union graphic, depicting the group's internal conflict data, circulated on Twitter. According to the graphic, 1,130 terrorist hideouts have been raided by government security forces, 3,102 terrorists have been killed, 812 military personnel and civilians have been killed, thousands have been injured, and hundreds displaced. The graphic also said that 17,250 "security reports" have been released by the armed forces, but it was not clear what those reports were.

The Sinai Tribes Union is a pro-government, unofficial coordinating body for the Sinai's tribes and has been active since 2015. No time frame or method for compilation was specified with the given statistics.



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EGYPT
**SECURITY
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